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Lee, Elisha

Working in peace and harmony

[Philadelphia?]

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Working in Peace and Harmony

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Box 109

Address delivered November 5, 1921, before the Pennsylvania Square Club of Philadelphia, by Elisha Lee, Vice-President, Eastern Region, Pennsylvania Railroad System.

CB June 20, 1923
AET

Mr. President, Members and Guests
of the
Pennsylvania Square Club of Philadelphia:

TONIGHT you have me at a distinct disadvantage, for I have not the honor of being a member of your ancient fraternity. Just why I have never become affiliated with one of your lodges I cannot say, for among railroad men Masonry seems to be magnetic. In my twenty-nine years of service with the Pennsylvania Railroad System, I have been associating with Masons in all departments of the railroad, and I have always had a very high regard for the organization, based on the high standards of manhood its membership displays.

You can therefore readily appreciate the pleasure it gave me when your President, Mr. Jones, invited me to address you this evening and I found that my engagements would permit me to accept.

These are busy times for all of us, and I always have a feeling of deepest regret when, on being invited to speak at a meeting of Pennsylvania Railroad employes, and especially employes of the Eastern Region, I have to reply with that stereotyped expression—"owing to previous engagements I find it impossible for me to be present," and so on.

So, while I am unable to meet you on the level of masons, I am sure that for the remainder of the evening we can fraternize as brothers in a lodge of "Free and Accepted—Railroad Men," working under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge—The Pennsylvania Railroad System.

While the large majority of those here this evening are Pennsylvania Railroad people, I notice in your By-Laws that Masons employed by the Pennsylvania Railroad System, the American Railway Express Company, the Pullman Company and affiliated companies are also eligible to membership. If my remarks are addressed at times to employes of the Pennsylvania Railroad, I trust you will understand that being an officer of the Pennsylvania Railroad I speak perforce as a Pennsylvania Railroad man. I fully realize that the work of the employes of the Express Company and the Pullman Company is very similar in nature to that of the railroad man. My remarks, therefore, will apply with equal force to them concerning their relations to their fellow-workers in the Express or Pullman employ, as well as to their associates in the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Similarity in Organization

In looking over a printed program for the month's meetings of one of the Masonic lodges in Philadelphia, I observed that the lodge appeared to be organized for the purpose of conducting its affairs on much the same plan as our railroad is organized for serving the public.

In the railroad we have Grand Officers; they are the System executives here at Philadelphia—the President and the administrative Vice-Presidents in charge, respectively, of operating, traffic, finance, accounting and real estate, purchasing and insurance. Under these officers we have five subordinate "lodges," represented by the four Regions of our Railroad System and the Altoona Works. For each of these "lodges" we have a Worshipful Master—the Regional Vice-President—

with his Senior and Junior Wardens—the General Manager and Assistant General Manager—so on down the line in practically the same form as your lodges are officered.

I, of course, know that Free Masonry is an institution of very great antiquity, yet it came as a distinct surprise when I read in that announcement to which I just referred that this year in which we are now living is the Masonic year 5921. So, Free Masonry is four thousand years older than the Christian era.

Masonry is a greater living force in the world today than ever before in its history.

Our Pennsylvania Railroad System, which I have likened to a Grand Lodge, is but seventy-six years old—a mere infant, as it were—yet this infant is passing through a period of discontent and dissatisfaction which, as I have been told, cannot exist and never did exist in your fraternity.

Now, why is it? What is back of your society which enables it to "carry on" throughout nearly six thousand years without any discord?

Working Together

In a booklet entitled "The Science of Masonry," which is in the library of your Grand Lodge at the Masonic Temple, on Filbert Street, one of the outstanding features is the phrase "Peace and Harmony." If that is your guide, and you are continuously striving with that as a goal, allowing nothing to be injected into your work or the workings of your lodges which would destroy the peace and harmony of a well organized and properly managed lodge, then I do not wonder at the present high standing you have attained in the world.

The writer of the booklet continued: "When

a company of brethren are dwelling together in peace and harmony, as every lodge of Free Masons should dwell, then, like will draw like and every piece of Masonry material in the community will be drawn to the lodge, as steel is drawn to a magnet."

Therein lies the gist of what is uppermost in my mind now, and which has been ever since I was General Manager—or as you would call it in fraternal language, Senior Warden—of that portion of this railroad on which you are all employed.

I am striving with all my power to build up a lodge of railroad men on the Pennsylvania Railroad who will work together with the management in peace and harmony all the time. In this I am not alone.

If you, the members of the Masonic Fraternity, could form the magnetic power to draw unto yourselves in the railroad field those who can and are willing to work in peace and harmony, the Pennsylvania Railroad System would, in less time than one can imagine, stand out in as bold relief among the railroads of the country as the Masonic Fraternity does among the secret societies of the world.

Honor in Railroading

And why shouldn't we? Why shouldn't, for instance, the employes of the Pennsylvania Railroad be paid as high wages as other citizens of the United States for performing the same kind of work? Or why shouldn't they work under just as favorable conditions as any one, whether in the railroad or the industrial field? Why shouldn't railroading be just as pleasant an occupation and as satisfactory or as honorable as working elsewhere?

It should be, and it is within your power

to make it so. There is no one-sided way, however, of attaining that goal. The management and the employes must, in striving for it, work in peace and harmony with each other.

Advancement by Merit

To most of you railroading is your life work. You entered the service, as most of our higher officers did, at the very bottom and have since been striving to go upward in the ranks. Promotion comes rather slowly at times, but, nevertheless, surely for the one who is prepared for the next step above.

When I started railroading it seemed as though every man on the railroad regarded himself as a potential general manager or president. If the young railroader then wanted to, it was within his power to work up to almost any position. That spark of ambition has been greatly dimmed, I am sorry to say, during recent years. While I have no desire to take issue with the present methods of labor unions, one of the most unfortunate things about some of them is the destruction of the ambition for advancement and the inculcation into the minds of the membership of the principle that one should not try to surpass his fellow-worker.

Don't lose sight of that word promotion. You may talk about seniority rules and all that, and with all things equal I have no fault to find with seniority rules. Don't let that blind you, however, to the fact that unless you are prepared for the job ahead of you, when, through seniority rules you are advanced to it, sooner or later you will be unable to carry properly the load placed upon your shoulders. The company, then, for which you work, will be the sufferer. This the public will be quick

to discover and it will very soon affect you personally.

I wish it were possible to have a speedy return of that former feeling of pride in being a Pennsylvania Railroad employe. It is true that some of us still have it, and to those I want to say, for your own good, let that feeling radiate from you in all lines, so that its influence will be felt by those with whom you daily come in contact.

Within the memory of a large majority of you present here this evening, the Pennsylvania Railroad was looked up to as an ideal public service institution. In the transportation world its service was the standard. Its policies, discipline, service, foresight, engineering skill, and progressive ideas were matters of public discussion. There was then the keenest interest displayed by every one in his work, regardless of his position. Each felt a certain amount of responsibility for maintaining the reputation of the company which gave him employment.

Pride in Pennsylvania Railroad

Have you ever stopped to consider just what the Pennsylvania Railroad System is today? What it means to be connected with it?

Do you realize that when you say you are a Pennsylvania Railroad man you are a personal representative of a two billion dollar corporation? Do you fully realize just what that means? It means that the property of the Pennsylvania Railroad System, which takes in the right of way, buildings, bridges, tracks, yards, terminals, engines and cars, cost over two billions of dollars to produce.

That money, too, came entirely from the savings of other people, the great majority of whom are persons of moderate means just

like yourselves. Don't lose sight of that, which carries with it also the fact that their property has been placed in your hands to operate, which is a great responsibility.

Aside from that, doesn't it give you a feeling of pride to know that you personally represent one of the world's largest enterprises? It does to me, and I know it does to you.

This railroad has at present over 207,000 personal representatives who are working throughout the length and breadth of thirteen states in the Union, in which live half the population of the country. That is a stupendous statement to contemplate, yet it is true.

Each of these persons is a salesman for this two billion dollar institution, which does nearly two million dollars' worth of business every day.

Each has within his grasp the power of establishing a world-wide reputation not only for himself, but also for the railroad of which he is a part.

The public is observing your every move, whether on or off duty. With each performing his assigned task with a genuine feeling of pride in his work, the day will soon return when the ideal for which every other railroad or industrial establishment will strive will be the standard set by the Pennsylvania Railroad System.

Things to Think About

Last year the gross earnings of the Pennsylvania Railroad System were 12 per cent. of that of all Class 1 railroads. We rendered 15.7 per cent. of the passenger service based on the unit of passenger miles, and of the revenue ton miles of freight carried by all of the railroads of the country, our propor-

tion was 10.9 per cent. We own over 12 per cent. of all the freight cars of the country; we have 15,500 separate industrial sidings on our lines. There are over 2,500 freight or passenger agencies on the System.

These are things to think about when you consider whether or not it is an honor to be connected with this big company.

We are a real factor in the welfare and happiness of the country, and when you started railroading you took upon yourself a grave responsibility. You accepted a position and thereby signified your willingness to assist in advancing the best interest of the United States.

Make Every Effort Count

Now what do you get from this company about which I have just spoken? Unless you put into it your best you cannot get the best out of it.

Our wages do not come from the stockholders. They come directly from the people whom we serve, and the only way to sustain good wages is to make every hour of work more productive than it is any other place.

At the present time, out of every dollar received by the Pennsylvania Railroad System for freight and passenger service rendered, practically one-half is paid over to the employes in wages. Our total payroll for September alone was twenty-six and one-half millions of dollars. That means that over one million dollars were paid out in wages each working day of the month.

In order to reach the highest standard of pay, there is only one way, and that is to raise your work to the highest standard of efficiency and make your every effort productive of the greatest amount of service.

Now on the Pennsylvania Railroad we have just set up a plan of employe representation by which the employes and the management can get together and in peace and harmony decide all differences which may arise between them. Under this plan, the employes are given an equal voice and voting power with the management in deciding all questions affecting their own welfare.

This plan is, to my mind, as it should be, because recourse to force never permanently settles anything. Yet it has been contemptuously asserted by some that the efforts the management has been putting forth to realize this ideal are merely for effect and that the whole thing is "a lot of bunk."

Management Is Sincere

How can I get the employes of our railroad to know the feeling in my breast concerning their welfare if the most important things I say to them in printed or spoken words are characterized as "bunk"?

Pardon a personal note. Those of you who know me personally I am sure do not doubt my sincerity. You know that the last thing to enter my mind would be to try and put something over on you, as the saying is. There is nothing in our plan of employe representation which is antagonistic to any institution, be it a labor union or an organization such as yours. We have stated times over that the management is not trying to settle a quarrel with its employes, for no quarrel exists. We are endeavoring, to the best of our ability, to provide a means whereby there will be no occasion for a quarrel to arise.

To be sure, there will at times be differences of opinion between the management and the men. That is but natural where you have so

large a body of men to deal with, but among reasonable men differences can be adjusted without quarreling, and that is precisely what our representation plan is designed to bring about.

All Pulling Together

The success of the Railroad, the Express or the Pullman Company means your success. All the teachings that try to represent to the employes that their interests are antagonistic to those of the management are absolutely wrong. A railroad must pay its men out of its earnings, and those earnings depend on the good-will of the public it serves. Unless a railroad is prosperous, good wages and advantageous terms and conditions of employment cannot be had.

The product of our efforts is service, and the better we serve the better will be our standing among those whom we serve.

What I want particularly to leave with you is the feeling of sincerity on my part in striving to better your positions equally with that of the railroad.

The stronger your company is, the better will be your position in that company, and there is no one here tonight who is not desirous of being connected with a good, strong, thriving, progressive company or institution, regardless of the fields of its endeavors.

Did it ever occur to you what happens to an industry where every one connected with it is pulling for it, is thinking how they can better the product—in our case transportation—how the production can be cheapened by more efficient and economical work of every individual? Did it ever occur to you what would happen to our railroad if every

one of the 207,000 were doing just this? Think it over.

In your lodge you are a carefully and strictly governed body of men. Decisions, undoubtedly, have to be made from time to time which may not be in accord with the ideas of each individual member, yet, in order to conduct your work in peace and harmony, you must all be amenable to the rule of the Worshipful Master.

Does that not teach you that in the railroad world by the adoption of the same principle the greatest good can be accomplished? If it is possible to conduct the business of your fraternity for thousands of years on that principle, I should like to have every member of the Masonic Fraternity working on this railroad go out among his fellow-employes as a missionary in the cause and preach that same doctrine of fair dealing and an appeal to reason.

Interests of All Considered

Decisions concerning one class of employes may at times not be to the entire satisfaction of others. Or some individuals might not be exactly satisfied when looking at the matter from their own personal viewpoints.

That should be no cause for immediately starting to foment trouble and being forever discontented. Does a Mason act that way in his lodge when, for instance, the Worshipful Master rules against him? I doubt it. Rather, I think he surely must have a means of appeal, in an orderly manner, when he can make his case known in all detail. If this were not so, you could not continue in peace and harmony for any length of time.

Why then should it be necessary to assume a different attitude in the Railroad Lodge?

We have, as I have just stated, a means of appealing from decisions, and you have every assurance from the management that equity and justice will prevail in every case. In fact, under our new system of employe representation, you have within your own power the possibility of assisting in seeing that all employes are satisfied in all matters concerning their welfare.

If the railroader has learned his work in the Railroad Lodge as well as I understand he must his Masonic work, he will readily see or must surely be able to realize that when the management renders a decision on points of discipline, advancement, conditions of employment, or wages to be paid, it is done for the good of the entire army of 207,000 employes whose welfare the management must at all times keep in mind.

The fact that your fraternity has stood these thousands of years is evidence that the underlying principles of the fraternity are most assuredly sound in all respects. These every Mason knows, as he must be thoroughly familiar with them in order to work properly within the Lodge.

That being the case, is it not possible for you Masons to practice outside of the lodge rooms what you are instructed in within them?

Masonic Ideals in Railroading

Cannot the Masons on the Pennsylvania Railroad System form a nucleus for injecting into our Railroad Lodge, either directly or indirectly, that "something" which has been so characteristic of your Fraternity ever since the days of King Solomon?

He was a wise old king, and the high ideals he established during the building of the

temple at Jerusalem, which have been passed on down to you, may be very applicable to our work today.

If they maintained throughout ages such a high standard for a body of men who call themselves Masons, surely they will do the same for a body of men who form the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Square Deal for All Assured

Speaking for the management, I can pledge you my word that each and every one from the Board of Directors and the President on down is most earnestly and sincerely doing everything within his power to establish on the Pennsylvania Railroad a scale of wages and a standard of working conditions second to none.

The management wants, above everything else, that its men shall have a square deal; a square deal from the individual supervisory officers, a square deal from the Company at large, and a square deal from the public whom we serve.

A square deal must be deserved, however, on the part of the employe. Regardless of his position, it can be but only through his taking renewed interest in his work.

Your Fraternity stands out as a shining light, and I earnestly ask that you assist the management in making the Pennsylvania Railroad System stand out in like degree above all other railroads in the world.

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